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ACTION ARA-16

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5513
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044;
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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TAGS: SOPN, PINS, AR
SUBJ: ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT SHUTS DOWN "LA SEMANA" MAGAZINE

1. SUMMARY: ARGENTINA'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT ON
OCTOBER 29 SHUT DOWN "LA SEMANA" MAGAZINE FOR ALLEGEDLY
COMMITTING "DEGRADING ACTIONS AGAINST ESSENTIAL INSTITU-
TIONS OF THE COUNTRY" (READ AS AGAINST THE MILITARY).
THE CLOSURE REFLECTS THE MILITARY'S INCREASING SENSITI-
VITY TO PRESS CRITICISM, WHICH THE MILITARY CLAIM TO
BELIEVE IS PART OF A COORDINATED CAMPAIGN TO DENIGRATE
THE ARMED FORCES. THE CLOSURE ALSO APPEARS TO BE AN
ATTEMPT TO COW THE MEDIA INTO BEING LESS CRITICAL OF THE
MILITARY. WHETHER THIS ATTEMPT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL
REMAINS TO BE SEEN, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE INITIAL PRESS
REACTION HAS BEEN A CHORUS OF CRITICISM CONCERNING

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REEDOM OF THE PRESS. END OF SUMMARY.

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2. (U) ARGENTINA'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT ON OCTOBER 29 SHUT DOWN "LA SEMANA" MAGAZINE FOR COMMITTING "DEGRADING ACTIONS AGAINST ESSENTIAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE COUNTRY" (READ AS AGAINST THE MILITARY). THE DECREE WAS SIGNED BY PRESIDENT REYNALDO BIGNONE AND INTERIOR MINISTER LLAMIL RESTON. THE DECREE ALSO PROHIBITS THE PUBLICATION OF ANY OTHER MAGAZINE THAT MIGHT SEEK TO TAKE THE PLACE OF "LA SEMANA".

3. (U) THE LAST ISSUE OF "LA SEMANA", WHICH WAS DISTRIBUTED TO NEWS STANDS ON OCTOBER 28, BEARS A COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF A WELL-KNOWN ARGENTINE TELEVISION HUMORIST AND SCRIPT WRITER (GERARDO SOFOVICH) WEARING A MILITARY CAP AND GRIMACING. THE CAPTION UNDER THE PHOTOGRAPH SAYS, "SOFOVICH AND THE MILITARY MEN OF TV: THE RUSSIAN 'AGAINST' THE COLONELS". INSIDE THE ISSUE, THERE ARE SIDE-BY-SIDE PHOTOGRAPHS AND CAPTIONS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY (WHICH HAS BEEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION FOR ELEVEN YEAR) AND AN AIR FORCE BUILDING (WHICH WAS BUILT IN JUST 20 MONTHS).

4. (U) THE DECREE CALLED FOR "CLEAR COMPREHENSION BY ALL ARGENTINES" THAT "THIS TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE MARKED BY ATTITUDES AND CONDUCT THAT ARE SELF-DETERMINED WITHIN GROWING MARGINS FOR FREEDOM." RECALLING THAT THE MILITARY JUNTA HAD ISSUED A WARNING ON OCTOBER 22 AGAINST 'DESTABILIZING OR DIVISIVE ACTIONS,' THE GOVERNMENT SAID IN ITS DECREE THAT "DESPITE THIS, AND AFTERWARDS, THE MAGAZINE "LA SEMANA" HAS PERSISTED IN ACTIONS SUCH AS THOSE MENTIONED."

5. [REDACTED] COMMENT: ARGENTINA'S MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE BECOME [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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INCREASINGLY EDGY DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS ABOUT PRESS CRITICISM, INCLUDING NEW PUBLICITY ABOUT THE MURDERS OF ARGENTINE DIPLOMATS HIDALGO SOLA AND HOLMBERG IN THE LATE 1970'S; THE OCTOBER 1982 MURDER OF MARCELO DUPONT; THE REPORTING TWO WEEKS AGO ABOUT AN APARTMENT BUILDING, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH WAS BEGUN IN 1980 WITH MONEY OBTAINED THROUGH AN ALLEGEDLY INAPPROPRIATE LOAN ISSUED TO A CONSORTIUM OF HIGH RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS UNDER THE VIDELA AND IOLA REGIMES, INCLUDING CURRENT PRESIDENT BIGNONE; THE DISCOVERY TWO WEEKS AGO OF UNMARKED COMMON GRAVES IN RAND BOURG (B.A. 6152); VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION REGARDING THE WORLD CUP SOCCER TOURNAMENT AND A

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LARGE MINING PROJECT, AND REVELATIONS ABOUT MILITARY ERRORS OR MISCONDUCT DURING THE MALVINAS/FALKLANDS WAR. MILITARY OFFICERS PROBABLY BELIEVE THAT THE PRESS COVERAGE IN GENERAL HAS BEEN SLANTED AND TOO HARD ON THE MILITARY. A CONSPIRACY THEORY EVOLVED WITHIN THE MILITARY WHICH ALSO APPEARS IN THE PRESS, TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE WAS A COORDINATED CAMPAIGN TO DENIGRATE THE ARGENTINE

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ARMED FORCES.

6. [REDACTED] THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP, WE SUSPECT, IS CONCERNED THAT SUCH CRITICAL PRESS COVERAGE HAS PURPORTEDLY HEIGHTENED ANXIETIES AMONG MILITARY OFFICERS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AND THE DEMOCRATIC OPENING. SOME ACTION EVIDENTLY WAS NECESSARY TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE OF DISCONTENT BUILDING WITHIN THE OFFICER CORPS. THUS A WARNING WAS ISSUED TO THE PRESS ON OCTOBER 22 CHARGING THAT "SOME SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA" HAD COMMITTED "ABUSES" OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND HAD CONDUCTED A "DIVISIVE, PERNICIOUS, AND DESTABILIZING SERMON WHICH COLLABORATES WITH THE REACTIVATION OF SUBVERSIVE IDEOLOGIES." THE OCTOBER 28 ISSUE OF "LA SEMANA" WAS THE LAST STRAW, AS FAR AS THE

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MILITARY WERE CONCERNED, AND GAVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY
TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF ONE MAGAZINE IN AN OBVIOUS ATTEMPT
TO COW THE REST. WHETHER THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL REMAINS
[REDACTED]
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TO BE SEEN, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE INITIAL PRESS REACTION
HAS BEEN A CHORUS OF CRITICISM CONCERNING FREEDOM OF THE
PRESS AND THE NEED FOR THE MILITARY BOTH TO RESPECT
THAT FREEDOM AND TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT.

7. [REDACTED] WE ARE NOT CERTAIN WHY "LA SEMANA" WAS SELECTED
TO BE THE EXAMPLE. OTHER MAGAZINES, SUCH AS "HUMOR"
HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE CRITICAL OF THE MILITARY RECENTLY.
MOREOVER, "EDITORIAL PERFIL", WHICH PUBLISHES "LA SEMANA",
ALSO PUBLISHES A NUMBER OF OTHER MAGAZINES, YET THE OTHERS
HAVE NOT BEEN SHUT DOWN. THUS, IT APPEARS THAT THE
MILITARY ARE NOT TRYING TO PUT "EDITORIAL PERFIL" OUT OF
BUSINESS, BUT WANTED TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF A PUBLICATION,
AND "LA SEMANA" WAS SELECTED. END OF COMMENT. SHLAUDEMAN
[REDACTED]

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